

# Call for Gilmore to act on Traveller evictions

**KITTY HOLLAND**

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MINISTER FOR Foreign Affairs Eamon Gilmore should "use all channels open to him" to intervene in the eviction of hundreds of Irish citizens from their homes in Britain, a prominent Travellers' rights campaigners has said.

Martin Collins of Pavee Point was speaking as human rights monitors and supporters from several countries gathered at Dale Farm in Essex where Basildon Council plans to evict 86 Traveller families this week.

The mostly Irish families were given notice in July to quit the area by this Wednesday after a long legal battle. The council says despite the fact the Travellers own the site, most do not have planning permission to dwell there.

Leader of the council Tony Ball said: "A forced clearance has always been a reluctant last resort for us, but the Travellers have left us with little option after exhausting the legal process. It has absolutely nothing to do with the Travellers' choice of lifestyle or ethnicity, and they are being treated in exactly the same way as any other citizen."

Mr Collins said he could not condone Travellers living illegally anywhere. "It is important though to say that about 50 per cent of the Travellers living there are doing so legally.

"I must say that at this late hour, there is an obligation on the Government and the Minister for Foreign Affairs to use the diplomatic channels and all channels available to them, to encourage Basildon Council not to carry out these evictions of Irish citizens."

Campaigners camped at Dale Farm supporting the Travellers say that up to 400 men, women and children could be left homeless after the quit notice expires at midnight on Wednesday.

As a petition of 1,600 signatures against the evictions was delivered to Downing Street last Thursday, Liberal Democrat peer Eric Lubbock, Lord Avebury, described the evictions as "just so stupid", saying up to 50 families "living peacefully on the site" were "going to be thrown on the roadside".

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